

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



Contact:
Eric Newland, Area Management Biologist
Breena Apgar-Kurtz, Asst. Area Manager
Phone: (907) 949-1320
Fax: (907) 949-1830

Lower Yukon Area Office
P.O. Box 127
Emmonak, Alaska 99581
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**2013 Yukon River Summer Salmon Fishery News Release #38
Summer Update # 4, Districts 1-6
Districts Affected: Yukon Area**

Assessment Projects

Lower Yukon Test Fishery (LYTF)/ ADF&G, YDFDA

8.5-Inch Set Gillnet: The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through June 30 is 5.14, which is below the historical average of 16.63 for late run years at the same date. CPUE may have been underestimated due to the influence of high water and debris, particularly early in the season.

8.25-Inch Drift Gillnet: The cumulative Chinook salmon CPUE through June 30 is 175.56, which is well below the average of 409.86 for this date.

Summer Chum Drift Test Fishery/ ADF&G, YDFDA

5.5-Inch Drift Gillnet: The cumulative summer chum salmon CPUE through June 30 is 2,318, which is below the historical median of 5,038 for this date.

Andreafsky River Weir/ USFWS

The Andreafsky River weir is expected to be fully operational and begin counting fish tonight, July 1.

Pilot Station Sonar Project/ ADF&G

Chinook salmon passage at Pilot Station sonar is estimated at 75,000 salmon as of June 30, which is below the historic average of 91,000 salmon for late run years at the same date. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at 1.8 million salmon, which is well above the historical median of 1.1 million salmon for this date.

Anvik River Sonar Project/ ADF&G

The Anvik River sonar project became fully operational on June 16. Summer chum salmon passage is estimated at 80,000 as of June 30, which is above the historic median of 55,000 for this date.

Gisasa River Weir/ USFWS

The Gisasa River weir was fully operational on June 20 and as of June 30, four summer chum salmon have been recorded.

Henshaw Creek Weir/ TCC

The Henshaw Creek weir was fully operational on June 29 and as of June 30, no salmon have been recorded.

Rapids Video Test Fish Wheel/ Zuray

The Rapids video test fish wheel was fully operational on June 20 and recorded its first Chinook salmon on June 28. Nine Chinook salmon have been recorded as of June 30, which is well below the historical average of 187 for this date. No chum salmon have been recorded.

NOTE: Other assessment projects will be added as they become operational.

Age Composition

The Chinook salmon age composition from the LYTF 8.5-inch set nets through June 30 was 3% age-4, 25% age-5, 71% age-6, and 1% age-7 fish. Age-5 fish were slightly below average for this date and age-6 fish were above average. Females were 57%. The sample size was 399 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the LYTF 5.5-inch drift nets through July 1 was 38% age-4, 60% age-5, and 2% age-6 fish. Age-4 fish were slightly below average for this date and age-5 fish were slightly above average. Females were 50%. The sample size was 718 fish.

The chum salmon age composition from the beach seine and dipnet commercial fishery through June 28 was 36% age-4, 62% age-5, and 3% age-6 fish. Females were 47%. The sample size was 800 fish collected from five periods.

Assessment

The Chinook salmon run timing is tracking later than average years. The Pilot Station sonar cumulative passage estimate of approximately 75,000 Chinook salmon through June 30 is below the historical average of 111,000 for this date, and is also below the average passage estimate of 91,000 at this point for late run years. A strong first pulse of Chinook salmon passed Pilot Station sonar June 21 through June 23. However, since June 23, lower numbers of Chinook salmon passed Pilot Station sonar than was expected based on test fishing indices in the lower river. Water level continues to drop at Pilot Station, but heavy commercial fishing activity in front of the sonar appears to be affecting counts and test fish catches, which are used for species apportionment. The Department has been trying to work with the community to keep the fishing

activity at least 250 yards downstream of the sonar site in an effort to avoid disrupting passage estimates. The historical average median of the Chinook salmon run at Pilot Station sonar for late years is June 27. Current data suggest the 2013 median of the run at Pilot Station was approximately June 26 through June 27. Based on the best data currently available and historical timing associated with an average late run, the 2013 Chinook salmon run size is coming in at the lower end of the preseason outlook.

Genetic mixed stock analysis (MSA) on the first pulse of Chinook salmon past Pilot Station sonar (June 16-24) estimated that the pulse was comprised of 72% Canadian-origin Chinook salmon.

Summer chum salmon passage through June 30 at Pilot Station sonar is estimated to be approximately 1.8 million fish, which is well above the historical median of 1.1 million for this date. The historical median of the summer chum salmon run at Pilot Station is June 27. Current data suggest that the summer chum salmon run is between the median and third quartile point. Based on historical run timing, the summer chum salmon run is on track to exceed the preseason outlook estimate of 1.3-1.5 million and may be in the range of 2.5 to 3.0 million fish.

Management Strategies

Based on the assessment information to date, the current projections are for a total run size near the lower end of the outlook range. Given the low passage estimate to date, the poor run sizes observed in recent years, and the difficulties in meeting escapement goals, it is warranted to continue to conservatively manage the Chinook salmon run. Subsistence salmon fishing gillnets have been restricted to no larger than 6 inches to target summer chum salmon and conserve Chinook salmon. Fishing periods have been canceled in Districts 1-4 to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon. Similar actions will be implemented in upriver fishing districts based on migratory timing as Chinook salmon travel upstream. This initial closure is being followed with reduced subsistence fishing opportunity sequentially upstream. These reduced subsistence fishing openings coincide with lower Chinook passage rates while summer chum salmon abundance remains high. Districts 1-3 have had a second fully closed subsistence period on what appears to be a second pulse moving through the lower river and upriver districts should anticipate similar conservation actions. During these reduced subsistence periods between pulse closures, gillnets continue to be restricted to no larger than 6 inches and fish wheels are being further restricted to require the live release of all Chinook salmon in order to target summer chum salmon and other fish species.

The summer chum salmon run appears to be much stronger than anticipated. Therefore, opportunity will be provided to target the summer chum when and where available in both the subsistence and commercial fisheries. Now that the Chinook salmon run has progressed past the average three quarter point for late year run timing and summer chum salmon are abundant, commercial fishing opportunity to target summer chum salmon using gillnets will be provided.

Current Management

Subsistence Fishing:

For the current subsistence schedule please call (toll free): **1-866-479-7387**. The current subsistence fishing schedules are as follows:

Coastal District:

Subsistence salmon fishing in the northern portion of the Coastal District will be open for a 12-hour period from 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 1, until 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, July 2, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

In the southern portion of the Coastal District, from the Naskonat Peninsula north to 62° North latitude, the current subsistence salmon fishing schedule remains unaltered and is open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

District 1: Subsistence salmon fishing will be open for one 12-hour period from 8:00 p.m. Monday, July 1, until 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, July 2, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

District 2: District 2 is currently closed to subsistence salmon fishing with gillnets. However, a reduced subsistence fishing period with 6-inch or smaller mesh size gillnets is being allowed to target abundant summer chum salmon while avoiding Chinook salmon.

Subsistence salmon fishing will be open for one 12-hour period from 8:00 p.m. Thursday, July 4, until 8:00 a.m., Friday, July 5, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to target summer chum salmon. Subsistence fishermen using 6-inch or smaller mesh size may keep Chinook salmon for subsistence purposes.

District 3: District 3 is currently closed to subsistence salmon fishing and will remain closed during the next scheduled subsistence salmon fishing period which was to begin at 8:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 3, to conserve Chinook salmon.

The department will notify fishermen by July 6 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule in District 2.

Subdistrict 4-A Lower (from $\frac{3}{4}$ miles downstream of Old Paradise Village upstream to Stink Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Anvik and Grayling):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A Lower is currently closed to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon. The 48-hour subsistence salmon fishing period scheduled to begin 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 3, will be reduced to a 24-hour subsistence salmon fishing period.

Subsistence salmon fishing will be open from 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 3, until 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 4. Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box. Fish wheels must be closely attended while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive.

Subdistrict 4-A Upper (from Stink Creek upstream to Cone Point, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Kaltag, Nulato, and Koyukuk):

Subsistence salmon fishing in Subdistrict 4-A Upper is currently closed to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon. The 48-hour subsistence salmon fishing period scheduled to begin 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 3, will be reduced to a 24-hour subsistence salmon fishing period.

Subsistence salmon fishing will be open from 6:00 p.m. Thursday, July 4, until 6:00 p.m. Friday, July 5. Gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size and fish wheels must be equipped with a chute or a live box. Fish wheels must be closely attended while in operation and all Chinook salmon caught in fish wheels must be returned to the water alive.

By regulation, fisherman in Subdistrict 4-A may use drift gillnets during open subsistence fishing periods on the mainstem of the Yukon River from June 10 to July 14.

Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C (from Cone Point to Illinois Creek, which includes the mainstem Yukon River communities of Galena and Ruby):

The subsistence salmon fishing schedule in Subdistricts 4-B and 4-C consists of two 48-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays until 6:00 p.m. Fridays and from 6:00 p.m. Sundays until 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays, with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

However, effective 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 2, Subdistrict 4-B and 4-C will close and remain closed during the next subsistence salmon fishing period which was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 3, to protect the first pulse of Chinook salmon as it passes through this subdistrict.

The department will notify fishermen by July 6 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule in District 4.

Subdistricts 5-A,B,C: Subsistence salmon fishing consists of two 48-hour periods each week, from 6:00 p.m. Tuesdays until 6:00 p.m. Thursdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Sundays, and gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

The first pulse closure has been implemented in Districts 1-4 based on migratory timing. The department will notify fishermen by July 4 concerning the subsistence salmon fishing schedule in Subdistricts 5-A,B,C.

Subdistricts 5-D: Subsistence salmon fishing is currently open 7 days per week, 24 hours a day and gillnets are restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

District 6: The subsistence salmon fishing schedule consists of two 42-hour fishing periods per week from 6:00 p.m. Mondays until 12:00 noon Wednesdays and from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 12:00 noon Sundays and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Old Minto Area: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 5 days per week from 6:00 p.m. Fridays until 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays and fishermen may use gillnets with a mesh size of 7.5 inches or less.

Innoko River: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size.

Koyukuk River: Subsistence salmon fishing is open 7 days a week, 24 hours per day with gillnets restricted to 6-inch or smaller mesh size to conserve Chinook salmon.

During subsistence salmon fishing closures, fish wheels may not be operated and gillnets with a mesh size greater than four inches and a length greater than 60 feet must be removed from the water.

Commercial Fishing:

Under new regulations adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in 2013, the department may by emergency order authority allow the use of dip nets, beach seines, and gillnets of 5 ½-inch or smaller mesh size not exceeding 30 meshes in depth as commercial gear. These new gear options are intended to allow for additional summer chum directed commercial fishing opportunity while reducing the incidental harvest of Chinook salmon.

The preliminary commercial harvest in Districts 1 and 2 combined through June 30 is approximately 142,000 summer chum salmon with a reported 675 Chinook salmon released alive.

District 1 Commercial Schedule:

Period #15: 8:00 a.m. Tuesday, July 2, until 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 2
(Dip Net/Beach Seine Only and Chinook salmon must be released)

Period #16: 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, July 2, until 12:00 midnight Tuesday, July 2
(South Mouth only, gillnets restricted to 5 ½-inch or smaller mesh size and not exceeding 30 meshes in depth)

District 2 Commercial Beach Seine and Dip Net:

Period #12: 12:00 noon Tuesday, July 2, until 12:00 midnight Tuesday, July 2

Subdistrict 4-A Commercial Fishwheel: Fish wheels must be manned at all times during operations and all Chinook salmon caught in the fish wheels must immediately be released to the water alive. Commercial fishing will be open for six 24-hour fishing periods:

Period #1: Monday, July 1

Period #2: Tuesday, July 2

Period #3: Wednesday, July 3

Period #4: Thursday, July 4

Period #5: Friday, July 5

Period #6: Saturday, July 6

The subsistence fishing schedule and recorded fishery announcements will be available 24 hours a day at 1-866-479-7387 (toll free outside of Fairbanks); in Fairbanks, call (907) 459-7387. If you have any questions regarding this report, please call the ADFG office in Emmonak at 949-1320 or in Fairbanks at 459-7274. The Emmonak ADF&G office will stand by on VHF channel 7A.